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Book Notices.

Modern Criticism and the Gospel of John.

Modern Criticism considered in its Relation to the Fourth Gospel: being the Bampton Lectures for 1890. By Henry William Watkins, M. A., D. S. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co. 1890. Pp. xxxix., 502. Price $5.00

The author of this work, in a "prefatory note," remarks that the subject and method of it received the hearty approval of the late Bishop Lightfoot and it was through the suggestion of the latter that he was appointed to deliver the Bampton Lectures for the present year. The plan adopted is simple and quite effective. It is suggested by the remark made by Keim in his History of Jesus that in relation to the Gospel of John our age has cancelled the judgment of the centuries. The judgment of the centuries is carefully and elaborately presented in the first three Lectures. Beginning with the third generation of the second century, with Irenæus and Clement, the author moves back to the second generation and then to the first of the same century, carefully scrutinizing the evidence for the reception of the Fourth Gospel as the work of John the Apostle, and finding the evidence overwhelming in the affirmative, not only as judged by himself but by the most able scholars of our time. He then casts a swift but comprehensive glance at the evidence of the sixteen centuries following, closing with an eloquent passage in which the testimonies of Bede and Bishop Lightfoot are placed side by side. With the exception of the indefinite Alogi, no testimony against the authenticity and genuineness of John's Gospel is found. Lectures four to seven make an exhaustive study of the results of criticism in the present century exercised upon the same subject. The various schools, that of Strauss, that of Tübingen, that of the Partitionists, the negative critics such as Keim, Davidson and Martineau, are first presented. The positive criticism, from Schleiermacher to Weiss, Zahn and Franke are treated with equal fullness. The work of the English scholars, Lightfoot, Westcott, Salmon, and Sanday, receives full statement. The discoveries of the age, such as the works of Hippolytus, Tatian, Caius, the Ignatian Epistles, are carefully outlined and their significance estimated. The concluding lecture enters into more general consideration of the scope and character of the Gospel and its message for our time. The book is a mine of materials for forming a judgment on this great question of the Fourth Gospel. The spirit of it is fair and manly. The style is clear and at times stirring. The plan of it, while allowing little scope for original work on the part of the author, is yet in itself quite original. He must speak through other men's lips, but the conclusions which are evident from the extent, and the variety of the testimony presented, as well as from the ability and prominence of the writers from whom he quotes, stand forth all the more clear and weighty. The book is a kind of water-mark of criticism; that it can be written with any definiteness of conclusion resulting, is the proof that criticism upon this question is no longer doubtful that the Fourth Gospel is the writing of John the Apostle. It affords another argument—one regrets that another should be needed—that criticism of the Scriptures is bringing to light larger and more valuable stores of evidence to sustain the truth and authority of the Word of God.